From: Sanders, Amy [/O=EXCHANGELABS/OU=EXCHANGE ADMINISTRATIVE GROUP
(FYDIBOHF23SPDLT)/CN=RECIPIENTS/CN=C8C3424E1C874447AA2629C6EBED66F3-ASANDE02]
Sent: 11/16/2020 2:17:17 PM
To: Sypniewski, Bruce [sypniewski.bruce@epa.gov]
Subject: RE: Regional Roundup

Laughed out loud at myself on that one 😊

From: Sypniewski, Bruce <sypniewski.bruce@epa.gov>
Sent: Monday, November 16, 2020 8:16 AM
To: Sanders, Amy <Sanders.Amy@epa.gov>
Subject: RE: Regional Roundup

Yep, jammed packed indeed.

From: Sanders, Amy <Sanders.Amy@epa.gov>
Sent: Monday, November 16, 2020 8:12 AM
To: Sypniewski, Bruce <sypniewski.bruce@epa.gov>
Subject: RE: Regional Roundup

Wow. That was a jam packed one. nice.

From: Sypniewski, Bruce <sypniewski.bruce@epa.gov>
Sent: Monday, November 16, 2020 8:09 AM
To: Sypniewski, Bruce <sypniewski.bruce@epa.gov>
Subject: Regional Roundup

IMPORTANT COVID-19 INFORMATION FOR ALL EMPLOYEES AND SUPERVISORS

To minimize risks and prevent transmission of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) in R5 workspaces, it is extremely important for all staff to review and adhere to the guidance in following resources: *Information for EPA's Workforce about Coronavirus* and *Region 5 COVID-19 Information*. Please take some extra time now to review this information and check back often for the latest updates. Furthermore, it's of the utmost importance to stay home if you are feeling sick! So as a reminder, EPA's Self-Assessment must be performed each time prior to departing to your office or duty station. If you answer "Yes" to any of the questions, please stay home.

If you have tested positive for the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) or have any of the symptoms, the following summarizes the most important steps to take immediately:

All EPA Staff: If you have tested positive for the coronavirus disease (COVID-19), or suspect you may have it, please immediately inform your first-line supervisor AND Region 5's COVID-19 Contact Tracers, Becky Iversen and Kristen Leetzow. **This applies to all staff, whether you have entered a R5 workspace recently or not.** Please know that all information reported to them will remain strictly confidential, and that no personal information or names will be shared.

All EPA Supervisors: If an employee informs you of a positive test result for the coronavirus disease (COVID-19), or suspects they may have it, you must immediately notify Region 5's COVID-19 Contact Tracers, Becky Iversen and Kristen Leetzow, as soon as possible. The employee's name(s) MUST be kept confidential.

For additional information or guidance on the above, please contact either of R5's COVID-19 Contract Tracers at the following:

Region 5's COVID-19 Contact Tracers
Becky Iversen: Iversen.rebecca@epa.gov or 312-886-5928
Kristen Leetzow: leetzow.kristen@epa.gov or 312-886-0674

EPA'S MASS ALERT NOTIFICATION SYSTEM (MANS) RECENT EXERCISES

Thanks to Region 5 staff for your participation in two recent exercises of EPA's MANS process using the Everbridge system. In October, Region 5 conducted a MANS drill by sending a notification to your office phone and e-mail. Last week, EPA Headquarters conducted an unannounced national MANS exercise using both business and personal contact pathways. The Region 5 drill identified a minor problem with the notification system that was quickly corrected. If you did not receive a notification from the MANS/Everbridge system, or, if you have any questions or concerns, please contact Mark Durno at 440-250-1743 (0-1743 from your office phone) or by e-mail (durno.mark@epa.gov). Mark is located in our Westlake, Ohio office.

You can update your contact information anytime in the Everbridge system at the following website: https://intranet.epa.gov/oa/smd/ps/mass-alert-notification-system.html

USE OR LOSE LEAVE ANNUAL LEAVE

- The leave year for 2020 ends at midnight on Saturday, January 2, 2021, and any "use or lose" annual leave not taken before Sunday, January 3, 2021, will be forfeited.
- **The deadline for employees to request and for supervisors to approve "use or lose" annual leave is this Saturday, November 21, 2020.**
- Employees can donate their "use or lose" annual leave to the Voluntary Leave Transfer Program or to the Voluntary Leave Bank Program.
- To allow processing time, the National Program Manager must receive your leave donation to the VLTP or VLBP before noon on Wednesday, December 29, 2020.
- HR Bulletin 21-001B, has been issued. This policy establishes procedures for determining employees needed to perform essential work in response to a national emergency (e.g., COVID). The policy sets a very high bar; It is unlikely EPA duty assignments will meet the below requirements.

    This policy only applies to work **directly related to resolving or coping with an emergency (like COVID) or its immediate aftermath**.
    - Examples:
      Staff required to review COVID data to determine if the agency can move to the next phase of reopening.
      Staff required to identify chemicals effective against COVID-19.
      Staff who may be deployed or required to support EPA, federal, state or Tribal efforts to combat, analyze, or mitigate the effects of COVID on agency staff or U.S. citizens.

The policy **does not apply** to:
- Increased workload due to the emergency, yet not directly in response.
- Having excess leave.
- An employee's own decision to cancel annual leave.
- The impact of COVID-19 on personal travel or social gatherings.

EARLY TIME AND ATTENDANCE CLOSEOUT FOR CURRENT PAY PERIOD

Due to the extensive number of Agency employees on telework, and the remote network VPN login and availability issues impacting People Plus, OCFO is again instituting an early closeout for time and attendance for the current pay period ending November 21, 2020.
- Any corrected timecards for *previous* pay periods must be approved by supervisors/managers on Tuesday, November 17, 2020.
- ***All timecards must be attested and submitted in PeoplePlus by close of business Wednesday, November 18, 2020.***
- All timecards for the *current* pay period must be approved by supervisors/managers in PeoplePlus no later than Thursday, November 19, 2020.
- Employees should not modify their timecard until notified that it is okay to make changes by their timekeeper or supervisor.
- Time Recording Code (TRC) guidance by Phase is illustrated in the following table:

Phase	TRC and Explanation
Phases 0 or 1	**Telework Regular – TREGW -** For use by employees who have regular telework days as part of their normal schedules. Regular Telework should be coded on your timecard.
	Telework Unscheduled – TWUSH - For use by agency employees in locations with maximum telework flexibility *still in place* (i.e., reopening Phases 0 or 1) and working unscheduled telework as a result of Coronavirus/COVID-19.
	Telework Medical Regular – TMREG - For use by employees under an approved Medical Regular telework agreement. *Only employees with a supervisor-approved medical telework agreement on file may use this code.*
	Telework Reasonable Accommodation – TWRAC - For use by employees under an approved Reasonable Accommodation telework agreement. *Only employees with an approved reasonable accommodation telework agreement on file may use this code.*
Phase 2	**Telework Regular – TREGW -** For use by employees who have regular telework days as part of their normal schedules. Regular Telework should be coded on your timecard.
	Telework Episodic/Situational – TWEHR - For use by employees in agency locations with expanded telework flexibility in place (i.e., Phase 2 or higher) and the telework isn't regular, medical or a reasonable accommodation.
	Telework Medical Regular – TMREG - For use by employees under an approved Medical Regular telework agreement. *Only employees with a supervisor-approved medical telework agreement on file may use this code.*
	Telework Reasonable Accommodation – TWRAC - For use by employees under an approved Reasonable Accommodation telework agreement. *Only employees with an approved reasonable accommodation telework agreement on file may use this code.*
Phase 3	Return to using regular TRCs
	Telework Episodic/Situational – TWEHR - For use by employees in agency locations with expanded telework flexibility in place (i.e., Phase 2 or higher) and the telework isn't regular, medical or a reasonable accommodation.

HATCH ACT AND THE DAYS AFTER THE ELECTION

If you're wondering about post-election, Hatch Act implications, see the chart below.

HOW THE HATCH ACT APPLIES TO THE 2020 ELECTION (after 11/3/20)	
Wearing campaign items or displaying candidate photographs in the federal workplace (including telework locations) or on government time	Permissible
Expressing views about the election results or presidential or other partisan candidates in the federal workplace (including telework locations) or on government time	Permissible
Wearing or displaying items about *political parties* in the federal workplace (including telework locations) or on government time, including: • Political party paraphernalia • Forwarding emails from a political party • Texting about partisan political events • Sharing a post from a political party on social media	PROHIBITED
Engaging in any political fundraising at any time	PROHIBITED
Using official authority or resources to interfere with or affect the election	PROHIBITED
Engaging in certain post-Election Day activity *on behalf of a political party*, such as taking part in challenges, recounts, etc. on your own time	Permissible for lesser restricted; PROHIBITED for further restricted employees (e.g., career SES)

If you have any ethics questions, please email Ann Coyle, Regional Ethics Attorney, at coyle.ann@epa.gov.

ANNUAL ETHICS TRAINING MUST BE COMPLETED *BEFORE* YOU GO ON USE OR LOSE/ANNUAL LEAVE

The 2020 annual ethics training, "Outside Activities and Employment" is up and running in FedTalent! There is tons of information here, so keep reading

**Who must take the training?** All Region 5 EPA employees are required to take the training, including all senior officials and appointees.

Who does NOT need to take this training? Any *new employees* who completed their new employee ethics training in 2020. They already met their training requirement. Grantees (e.g., *SEE enrollees*, *ORISE* fellows) and *contractors* are not required to take EPA ethics training (and shouldn't).

How do I find the training? It's in FedTalent, but unfortunately, there is no tile or icon for it on the FedTalent home page. Follow the link below and use your LAN ID and PASSWORD or PIV card to log in to FedTalent. You must self-enroll by clicking the "enroll me" button. If there is language below the "enroll me" button that seems to indicate you are not authorized to enroll, disregard it. You are.

https://epafedtalent.ibc.doi.gov/mod/scorm/view.php?id=13991

Here's a visual on self-enrolling:
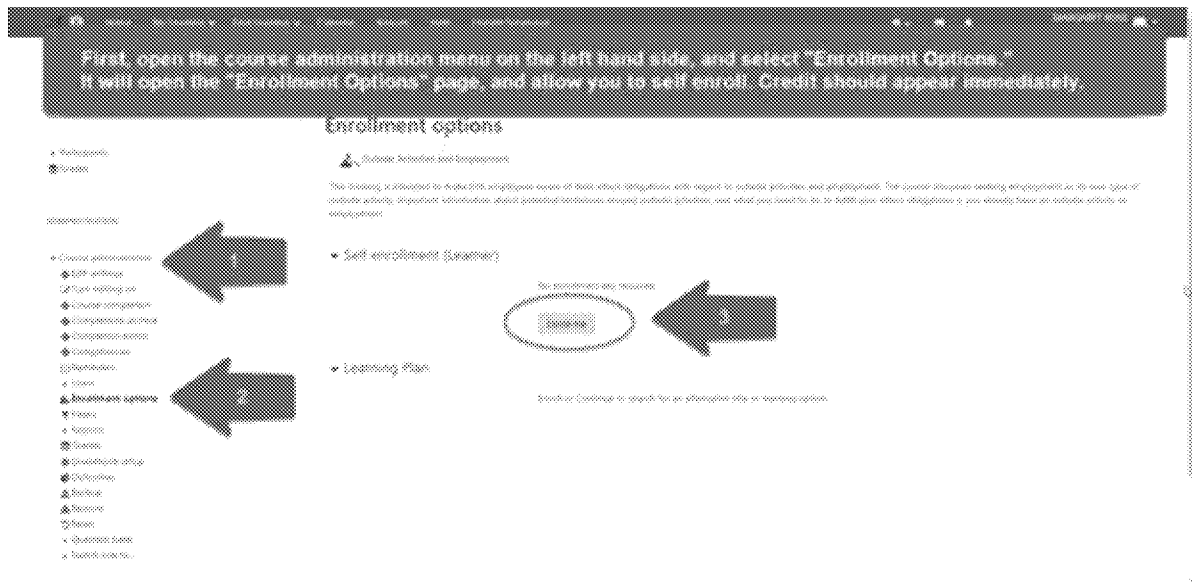
You can also access the training by clicking on the FedTalent link from the Region 5 intranet home page. After logging in, you will be taken to the FedTalent home page, where you can search for "outside activities" in the course search box. **Hint**: you *won't* find the course by looking for "2020 training." Then follow the enrollment instructions, above.

Your FedTalent pop-up blocker must be turned off for the course to work. The course works best in Google Chrome.

When is the DEADLINE for completing the training? In Region 5, the deadline for completing the training is **December 11, 2020**. *There will be no extensions past December 31.* The training will remain in FedTalent, but you will not be considered to have met the 2020 requirement after December 31, 2020.

- **What about USE OR LOSE?** If you will be out for an extended period of time at the end of the calendar year, **you must complete the training before you go on leave**. Anyone who is required to file a financial disclosure from (OGE form 450 or 278) is required by regulation to take the training and must do so before the end of the year.

Can I attend a live version of the course? Yes! On Thursday, **November 19, from 10-12** through MS Teams.

> Join Microsoft Teams Meeting
> | Conference Code/Ex. 6 | United States, Chicago (Toll)
> Conference ID: | Conference Code/Ex. 6 |
> Local numbers | Reset PIN | Learn more about Teams | Meeting options
> By participating in EPA hosted virtual meetings and events, you are consenting to abide by the agency's terms of use. In addition, you acknowledge that content you post may be collected and used in support of FOIA and eDiscovery activities.

For the lawyers in the Region, we will apply for CLE credit. You do not have to take the online version of the course if you attend the live training. (And you do not need to attend the live training if you took the online course.) The training will be recorded, but listening to the recording after the fact will not count toward

meeting your annual ethics training requirement. Attending one of the live Hatch Act trainings in October also did not count toward meeting you annual ethics training requirement.

How do I document my completion of the course? There are several "knowledge checks" and a quiz at the end of the course. Course completion is automatically logged in your FedTalent learning record after you have completed the last slide of the training and followed the instructions on where to "click" and exit the course. To confirm completion, go into FedTalent, select "My Learning" (in the upper left hand corner of the page), then "Record of Learning." You will see your record of the completed training with your course completion date.

Troubleshooting

- Call the FedTalent help desk: Phone: 1-888-367-1622 option 3,6 (M-F 6:00am-5:30pm MDT) or Email: HRMS_Helpdesk@ios.doi.gov. If you email the FedTalent help desk, please cc: Ann Coyle (coyle.ann@epa.gov) so she can let the course developers know what kind of issues learners are encountering.

- Check out the updated training page on the Ethics SharePoint site, what follows is screen shot of the training page:
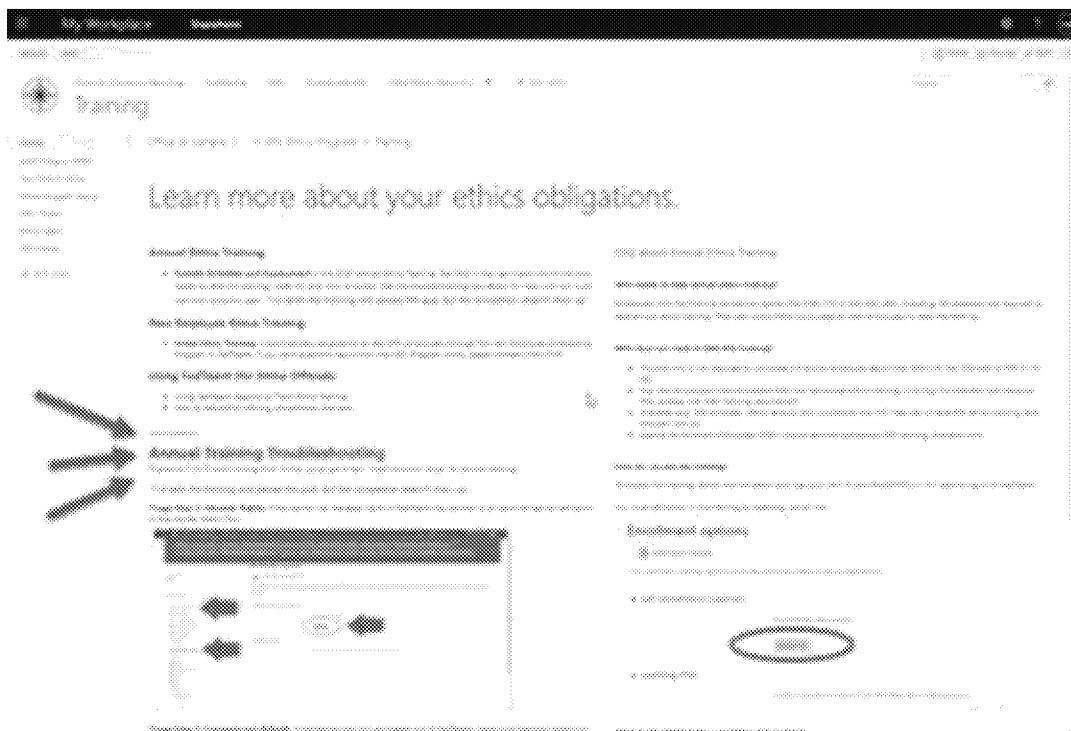
- **ANSWER TO THE #1 QUESTION (so far):** _"I've take the training and passed the quiz, but the completion doesn't show up. What should I do?"_

Triage Step 1: Complete and Refresh. If you have not yet logged out of FedTalent, make sure that you made it to the final slide, exited properly, and then waited for the system to update. There is usually some fleeting language at the top of the browser that says "updating". Make sure it's done before closing the browser. You should always be able to log back in and pick up where you left off, so try that first before calling for more help.

Triage Step 2: Check back tomorrow. Often, the problem resolves itself. There may be a lag in the refresh/system updates and when you log off or call for help. The update completes when you log back in to FedTalent.

Triage Step 3: Elevated Rights. If you have elevated rights in FedTalent, then you may be able to see the course without actually enrolling in it. The solution is to make sure you are self-enrolled in the course. See the first screenshot, above, for instructions on self-enrolling.

STILL NOT FIXED?

If you still have no completion recorded, then the problem may be due to a *lost connection to FedTalent.* If you lost connection at any point between the launch of the course and the end of the quiz, then FedTalent stopped recording your progress and interactions with the course. Unfortunately, this glitch can occur for myriad reasons: your VPN or WiFi cut out or you have spotty bandwidth. Something as simple as using a microwave oven can disrupt WiFi network temporarily.

Resolution: Retake the quiz. Log out fully (by closing out of the browser completely) and then log back in. Use the navigation on the left side of the player to skip ahead to the quiz. Yes, this is annoying, but it's been 100% successful.

> **Do I need to print a training certificate?** No, save the paper! OHR policy is no more printed certificates because we can access our electronic records of learning at any time.

If you have any questions about the training or ethics in general, please visit the Ethics SharePoint home page or contact the regional ethics attorney, Ann Coyle, at coyle.ann@epa.gov.

AVOID PERSONAL SERVICES WITH CONTRACTORS

The FAR H-21 EPAAR 1552.237-76 Government – Contractor relations, states that "personal services" are not allowed. "Personal Services" are considered any requests for services from Region 5 the Regional IT Support Service (RITSS) contract personnel that are made outside of the 3-HELP desk request or Task Order Contract Officer Representative (TOCOR).

The Government and the Contractor understand and agree that the services to be delivered under this contract by the contractor to the Government are non-personal services and the parties recognize and agree that no employer-employee relationship exists or will exists under the current contract between the Government and Contractor personnel. It is, therefore in the best interest of the Government to afford both parties a full understanding of their respective obligations.

Direct contractor interaction (i.e., by phone or email)
1. If you are not a TOCOR or Task Manager on the Regional IT Support Service (RITSS) contract, and require support services please use the Enterprise IT Service Desk ServiceNow portal, 3HELP hotline, or a Telecommunication Service Request (TSR). Contacting the contractors directly i.e., by phone or email is a violation of the FAR.

   a. The following individuals are contactors on the RITSS contract:
      i. **On-Site Manager** – Willie Jones
      ii. **3Help Desk Manager** – Kerrance Kelly
             Staffers

1. Mustapha, Boufath
2. Tyshun, Brown
3. Erlinda, Carbajal
4. Sam, Chism
5. John, Corcoran
6. Robert (Bob) Englemann
7. Carmen, Graulau
8. Aaron, Green
9. Jeffery, Lacey
10. Dan, Long
11. Marcus, Mason
12. Cedric, Murray
13. Eucharia, Okabuonye
14. Henry, Okpo
15. Abigail, Ortiz
16. Alonzo, Romo
17. Meletius, Turner
18. James, Wolinkski
19. Jacquelyn, Wyatt

b. Any requests must come from IMB or GLNPO personnel assigned to the contract, if not through the Enterprise IT Service Desk ServiceNow portal, 3HELP hotline, or a Telecommunication Service Request (TSR)

c. Once a contractor performs work and you're satisfied and would like to provide him/her with a congratulatory/recognition please do so through the customer feedback survey you receive or you can email Darnell Wilson (wilson.darnell@epa.gov).

REGION 5 GIS DAY PRESENTATION

Region 5 GIS team members will give a presentation about GIS at EPA on Tuesday, December 1 from 11:00 AM – 12:00 PM. Geographic Information Systems (GIS) integrates hardware, software, and data for capturing, managing, analyzing and displaying all forms of geographic information and helps us answer questions by looking at data in a way that is quickly understood and easily shared. The talk will include examples of EPA projects that use GIS software tools such as Story Maps and EPA GeoPlatform and will conclude with a short trivia game to test your geography knowledge.

Click here to add the event to your Outlook calendar

Contacts: Eric Holbus (GIS Program Lead, MSD) and Lucy Stanfield (GIS Analyst, LCRD).

RETIREMENT PLANNING

Human Capital Branch has received several communications regarding retirement planning. The below information is provided to assist in preparing for a seamless transition.

Information to assist in preparing and planning from retirement can be found at the Cincinnati Shared Service Center Benefits SharePoint site or at OPM Retirement Services. Additionally you may contact a retirement counselor at the Cincinnati SSC at (513) 569-7699 or CIN_HRSSC_Benefits_Central@epa.gov. The SSC

recommends completing and submitting retirement requests as early as possible but not less than one month before your intended retirement date.

Information to assist in preparing to leave (retire, resign, transfer to another agency) EPA by can be found at the Office of Mission Support Employee Offboarding webpage. Before leaving, an Employee Separation Certification Form 3110-2 must to be completed. Your supervisor and Phyllis Simmons simmons.phyllis@epa.gov can assist in completing the Employee Separation Certification Form. Not timely completing the form may delay receiving lumpsum payments for unused annual leave.

PRE-RETIREMENT RECORDS TRAINING

On Thursday, November 19th, Todd Quesada and David Hoff will be conducting a records training for employees who will be separating from the agency in the near future. We highly recommend that you attend this training if you plan to separate this year, but the training will also be applicable to anyone contemplating leaving the agency in the next few years. The training will cover electronic systems like ECMS, SEMS, OneDrive, and ERC, as well as strategies for preserving and organizing paper records.

Click here to join the meeting

NEW RETURNED VOUCHER TRAVEL METRIC

OCFO identified a new metric for FY21 that tracks the percent of travel vouchers returned by Cincinnati Financial Center (CFC) Travel for missing receipts or other requirements. The new metric requires that the region keep the percentage of vouchers returned at 18% or under through March 2021, then 15% or under from April 2021, forward. For reference sake, Region 5 had a return rate of 15.5% in FY20, which means we have some work to do to decrease the percentage of vouchers returned for non-compliance. For the month of October Region 5 had 54 vouchers and 6 or 11% were returned to the traveler with errors. While we met the measure we were well above the average rate of return for Agency at 8%.

What does this mean to you? Travelers, travel preparers, reviewers and approvers need to check that vouchers have all required documents, correct expenses and approvals before routing to CFC Travel for certification and subsequent payment.

EXAMPLES WE FOUND IN RETURNED VOUCHERS FOR NON-COMPLIANCE:
- **All required receipts not uploaded**. For a list of receipts that must be uploaded to the voucher see: https://intranet.epa.gov/fmdvally/finservices/travel_policy_faq.htm#Receipts
- **Actual lodging rates not entered**. If lodging rates are different than the approved GSA per diem lodging rates, make sure to change accordingly.
- **Expenses on voucher do not match receipts or expenses are missing.** Make sure expenses on receipts and in voucher match and are complete.
- **Cost comparison missing if POV was used rather than flying.** A cost comparison is required when POV is used instead of flying. See EPA Travel Manual: RMDS 2550B Official Travel (January 2020) (PDF), page 47 for guidance and page 79 for an example of a cost comparison worksheet. Or use this cost comparison Excel template: Cost Comparison Worksheet (MS Excel) (51K)
- **2nd line supervisor approval needed if lodging is over 150% per diem**. See the Region 5 SOP for TA/TV total over $5,000 or 150% Over Per Diem, Template for 150% Per Diem for additional information.

- **Senior Resources Official (SRO) approval if the trip is greater than $5,000.** See the Region 5 <u>SOP for TA/TV total over $5,000 or 150% Over Per Diem</u>, <u>Template for Travel Exp Greater than $5,000</u> for additional information.

RESOURCES:
Region 5 Travel/Concur resource page: <u>Comptroller Branch Travel Page</u>
OCFO CFC Travel/Concur resource page: <u>https://intranet.epa.gov/fmdvally/finservices/travel.htm</u>
EPA Travel Manual: RMDS 2550B Official Travel (January 2020) (PDF) (99pp, 2.3MB)
POV vs Air travel cost comparison worksheet: Cost Comparison Worksheet (MS Excel) (51K)
For assistance contact your Region 5 <u>Travel Concur Division Contacts</u>

CFC Travel has begun sending us monthly reports with details on all returned vouchers. We will use those reports which include reasons for the returned voucher and names of the traveler, travel approver as well as the travel reviewer to look for any patterns and communicate further with those who may need further assistance. Please feel free to reach out to Mara Notbusch with questions.

Bruce F. Sypniewski
Deputy Director
Mission Support Division
USEPA, Region
Phone: 312-886-6189